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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 105

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (A/55/383 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/55/383, para. 121)

The President: Members will recall that at its 35th plenary meeting, on 17 October 2000, the General Assembly decided to consider agenda item 105 directly in plenary meeting for the sole purpose of taking action on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto.

The report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on the work of its first to eleventh sessions is contained in documents A/55/383 and addendum 1.

In this connection, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report contained in document A/55/383.

I give the floor to Mr. Luigi Lauriola, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, to introduce the report.

Mr. Lauriola (Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime): In December 1998, the General Assembly voted to establish an open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc committee for the purpose of elaborating a convention against organized crime. To complement the convention, the Assembly also directed that three additional protocols be negotiated — one on illicit trafficking in women and children, a second on illicit trafficking in firearms, and a third on the illegal trafficking in, and transporting of, migrants. In resolution 54/126, of 17 December 1999, the Assembly requested that the Ad Hoc Committee accelerate and complete its work by the year 2000 and submit the final text of the Convention and its Protocols to the Assembly for adoption prior to a high-level signing conference. In accordance with resolution 54/129 of 17 December 1999, the High-level Signing Conference is to be hosted by the Government of Italy, and is now scheduled to take place in Palermo from 12 to 15 December.

It is indeed a great privilege and an honour for me to speak before the Assembly today as the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee established by the General Assembly. As the Chairman, I am here to present the text of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, along with two additional Protocols — one on

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illicit trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and the other on illicit trafficking in, and transporting of, migrants. These texts were intensively worked out during 11 sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee and were finalized by unanimous agreement in less than two years, from January 1999 to October 2000. That might sound like a surprisingly rapid rate of progress within a relatively short span of time, but the fact is that the seeds of that success were sown well before 1999.

The idea of preparing a United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was first formally raised at the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime, which was held in Naples on 23 November 1994. In approving the Naples Political Declaration and its Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime, the General Assembly urged States to implement them as a matter of urgency. There was then a whole series of additional initiatives that helped to the spark the international community's awareness about the need to fight transnational organized crime.

I want to underline in particular the importance of the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Cairo; the Regional Ministerial Workshop, held in Buenos Aires; meetings in Palermo; the African Regional Ministerial Workshop, held in Dakar; the Regional Ministerial Workshop held in Manila; and the meetings of the Friends of the Chair held in Rome, Buenos Aires and Vienna. Of special importance was the meeting of an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts held in Warsaw, which I believe took place in February 1998. Great credit is also due to the Government of Poland, which introduced the first actual draft of the Convention. That was followed by another draft, submitted by the United States, and by a summary of proposals by various countries, prepared by the Max Planck Institute at the request of the United Nations Secretariat.

Those who have experience of multilateral conventions know that the negotiating process tends to be a long and difficult one. Governments inevitably bring to negotiations basic differences in juridical concepts and the unique features of their legal systems, not to mention the variety of political positions stemming from their domestic and foreign policy needs. That accumulated legal and political baggage must then be painfully sorted through in the quest for a compromise. Delay on each successive issue seems to be the order of the day. In our case, the diversity of juridical language that characterized our initial efforts would have made the Tower of Babel sound like a monologue of heavenly concord and mutual understanding.

Our success in concluding negotiations in a relatively short span of time was certainly not due to the simplicity of the task, the initial clarity of the concept or an absence of political disagreement. We began in an atmosphere of skepticism and hesitation but — little by little, step by step, slowly but steadily — it was the political will of the participants to tackle transnational organized crime that began to make itself felt. Some of the ingredients of success were in place from the very outset. We had almost 125 countries participating, which sent a highly qualified cadre of delegates drawn from the ranks of Government officials as well as from academia, while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international organizations, such as the Wassenaar Arrangement, added their experience and encouragement.

What helped make possible the participation of so many delegations were the voluntary financial contributions of several States; I should make particular reference to the United States, Japan, Poland, Austria, Norway, Italy and the Netherlands. But it was the emerging political will, driven by newspaper headlines and by public opinion, that was the catalyst that gave decisive impetus to the search for a global response to organized crime on a global level.

In the final analysis, it was that will that animated our work and that took the good faith of participating States and the talent of their representatives and forged them into an instrument able to overcome successive obstacles as they arose. Practically every delegation had something to contribute, and the ongoing pursuit of consensus put each delegation on an equal footing and brought home to each participant that he or she was a vital part of the process.

In the end, the pressure to succeed, the recognition of the international community's need for a convention and the dynamic of the negotiating process itself all became overwhelming. Countries that had been opposed even to the idea of discussing the possibility of an international instrument soon became the strongest supporters of a convention. Other

countries, such as Italy, Poland and Argentina, which were considered to be too idealistic, supported the process from the very beginning. That reminds me of what somebody has said: it is not necessary to be sure of success in order to succeed and in order to persevere.

For my own part, all I can say is that starting this process was certainly an act of courage. Continuing in the face of adversity was an act of faith. Concluding now by approving and ratifying the draft Convention would be an act of wisdom of which all those who participated in the negotiations could be proud. Indeed, all the members of the General Assembly could be proud of this achievement.

The draft Convention provides a framework and tools for better international cooperation against organized crime without borders. But what will be critical is its implementation. Now it is the turn of the General Assembly to provide the political will to put into practice the machinery of the draft Convention by adopting, signing and ratifying the three instruments before it as soon as possible. I refer not only to the draft Convention but also to the two draft protocols, on illicit trafficking in women and children, and on illicit smuggling of migrants.

For that reason, I have submitted a draft resolution recommending the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft Convention and the two draft protocols. I hope that the Assembly will accept that recommendation, and that as many members as possible will be able to participate in the signing conference, to be held at Palermo, hosted by the Italian Government.

Incidentally, as far as the draft resolution is concerned, corrections must be made to paragraphs 3 and 11 to bring them into conformity with United Nations language and practice.

I need to recall that the mandate given to the Ad Hoc Committee included also the elaboration of a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition. I regret to report that the Ad Hoc Committee was unable to complete its deliberations on such a draft protocol in time for submission to the Assembly. While we were very close to agreement, a few points — in particular marking — needed additional consideration.

Accordingly, the Ad Hoc Committee respectfully requests that it be allowed to continue its work, in conformity with resolutions 53/111, 53/114 and 54/126, so that it might have an opportunity to finalize its work in the near future. To that end, we would envisage calling a meeting early in 2001; a paragraph to that effect has been inserted in the draft resolution.

Allow me to express my sincere thanks to all the members of the 125 delegations that took part in the negotiations. I was particularly impressed by their knowledge, by their expertise and by their professionalism. They made it possible to conduct our deliberations in a positive, flexible and constructive spirit. The members of the expanded Bureau, some of whom I see here today, deserve special mention: Ecuador, France, Japan, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Slovakia, Tunisia, Venezuela and South Africa, which served as Rapporteur. And I personally am highly indebted to the Vice-Chairmen, who assisted me in the negotiation of the draft Convention — particularly Ecuador, Venezuela, Pakistan and Tunisia — and of the draft protocols — France and Poland for the draft protocol on migrants, Mexico and Slovakia for the draft protocol on illicit trafficking in persons, and Japan for the unfinished draft protocol on firearms.

Let me also convey my heartfelt thanks to the Secretary-General for the support given to our Committee through the United Nations Office at Vienna, and to the members of the Secretariat, in particular Mr. Jan van Dijk, Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde and, especially, the Secretary of the Committee, Mr. Dmitri Vlassis, for their unfailing assistance. I extend my thanks also to all other staff members who served with dedication.

Looking back to where we started, my mind once again is drawn to a line from the Italian poet Dante, who wrote that "From a small spark springs a majestic flame". We have come a long way. Not so many years ago, Governments tended to ignore crime beyond their borders. The statement issued by 72 heads of State at the recent tenth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Vienna, marked the sea-change that has occurred since. The dangers posed by organized crime to individual citizens and to the international community have rightly risen to the top of the agenda. The first steps have been taken, but we still have a long way to go. Now it is up to the Assembly to develop and recommend effective tools to provide a global response to this global scourge.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta align themselves with this statement.

The development of transnational organized crime, fostered by a context in which globalization is taking place, is a major challenge to the international community. Indeed, it is today one of the major non-military threats to the safety and security of individuals, the stability of societies, the sovereignty of States and the development and preservation of democracy. In the light of its universal mission, the United Nations is the forum best suited for devising the legislative tools to enable us together to combat this scourge.

The period of less than two years set by the General Assembly for negotiating a draft Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was exceptionally short for such a complex legal instrument of such vast scope. It was a sign of the urgency felt by Member States with respect to transnational organized crime and of their determination rapidly to acquire the tools to deal with the situation.

The European Union would like to congratulate the intergovernmental Ad Hoc Committee and its Chairman, Mr. Luigi Lauriola, for having ensured the success of this endeavour through sustained and persevering work. The European Union thanks Poland for having submitted the initial draft text of the Convention to the Ad Hoc Committee, and it would also like to express its gratitude to all the States that took part in the negotiations and displayed both the determination to arrive at an instrument that is as legally rigorous as it is effective and the spirit of compromise vital to overcoming the differences in approach which emerged during the discussions.

Finally, the Union would like to thank the Centre for International Crime Prevention, which supported the Ad Hoc Committee's work, and which, owing to the competence and commitment of its staff, greatly contributed to the conclusion of the negotiations within the time limits that had been set.

The European Union considers the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related Protocols to be an exemplary normative instrument. It is the first global legal instrument devised to combat transnational organized crime. In our opinion, it introduces key innovations in the legal field and in the procedures for cooperation among States parties.

As concerns the two related protocols negotiated and adopted along with the Convention, the European Union believes that these complementary instruments are vital, because they take into account, and set out specific measures for addressing, particularly serious types of organized transnational crime.

As regards the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the European Union would like to thank the Japanese presidency of the Ad Hoc Committee for all the efforts made to conclude the negotiations. We hope that a new session will be convened as soon as possible and that all Member States will demonstrate the spirit of compromise that is necessary for achieving a consensus.

Nonetheless, the European Union considers that the completion of negotiations on the Convention and its two related protocols is an outstanding achievement. This should not, however, cause us to overlook the work that is still ahead of us. Having arrived at satisfactory texts is one thing, but it is quite another to ensure their entry into force and implementation. In this respect, we shall still have several important bridges to cross following the adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution approving the Convention and its two additional protocols.

The first will be the signing conference, to be held in Palermo, Italy, from 12 to 15 December 2000. The European Union thanks Italy for offering to host the conference, which will conclude a cycle that also began in Italy — to be specific, in Naples in 1994, with the adoption of the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Crime.

The European Union calls upon all Member States to sign the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the protocols thereto at the Palermo conference.

The second stage will be the entry into force of the Convention and of its protocols. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee want this to take place once the text has been ratified by 40 States, so that the

geographical framework for the implementation of the text encompasses from the outset more than one continent or one single region of the world. The Union considers that this legitimate concern should not, however, cause a delay in the entry into force of the Convention and its protocols. It therefore urges all Member States to ratify the Convention and its two related protocols at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, the Union attaches great importance to the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention and its protocols by all those States that will be parties to it, including in cases in which assistance is needed to bring their institutional and judicial systems up to standard. With this in mind, and in order to attain this objective, the Union encourages Member States to contribute towards the widest possible implementation of these legal instruments.

The member States of the Union, for their part, are determined to sign and ratify the Convention and its related protocols as soon as possible and to resolutely apply all of their provisions.

By approving today the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two related protocols, the General Assembly will be manifesting the international community's determination to combat one of the most serious threats it is confronting today.

Mr. Vento (Italy): I am pleased to take the floor in the General Assembly to express my Government's warm appreciation for the excellent work done in Vienna by all the delegations that participated in the intensive negotiations, which were brought to a positive conclusion with the approval of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two protocols — the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

In particular, I wish to single out the contribution made by the Ad Hoc Committee, chaired by Ambassador Luigi Lauriola.

Italy fully endorses the statement made by France in its capacity as President of the European Union and wishes to add the following considerations in a national capacity.

The Convention and the two Protocols address sensitive issues and set up a complex normative system on matters such as criminal law, in which differences between national legislations make the drafting of international laws particularly difficult.

My country played a major role in the negotiating process that led to the finalization of the text of the Convention, whose draft was initially proposed by Poland. The process was launched in 1994 at the Naples World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime, which adopted a Political Declaration and an operational Action Plan. Significantly, it will conclude in December in Palermo, where the Italian Government is organizing a high-level political conference for the signing of the Convention and the supplementary Protocols.

As the European Union presidency noted, the successful completion of the text of the Convention and of the two Protocols in such a short period of time is clear evidence of the international community's growing awareness of the seriousness of transnational organized crime and of the need for urgent and effective international cooperation mechanisms to fight it.

Organized crime is harmful to quality of life and to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world. It jeopardizes economic development, corrupting and destabilizing social and political institutions. The adoption of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is a major step in the fight against this scourge. It is also a remarkable achievement in the promotion of justice and security, and ranks alongside the approval of the Statute of the International Criminal Court in the more recent actions of the United Nations.

Italy is particularly pleased by the specific contents of the three instruments that have been submitted to the General Assembly for adoption. The Convention does not simply lay out a general normative framework that correlates international laws on specific types of crimes. Instead, it is itself an innovative instrument that has a direct impact on the prevention and prosecution of a broad range of crimes, including all of the serious transnational crimes committed by organized crime groups.

To this end, the Convention includes not only measures to strengthen national crime-fighting systems, but also measures to foster cooperation among States. The improvement of national legislation is a prerequisite to preventing criminal groups from

growing and proliferating by taking advantage of loopholes in national systems. They are also a prerequisite to effective international cooperation.

The Convention gives prominence to the agreements reached on criminalizing behaviour that underlies the constitution and operation of criminal groups — such as criminal association, conspiracy, money laundering and corruption — as well as to provisions by which States undertake to adopt crime-prevention initiatives.

The Convention also contains significant measures on international cooperation between judicial and police authorities. The Italian Government is convinced that bilateral or regional agreements are not enough to meet the need for prompt collaboration in investigating and prosecuting transnational crimes committed by organized crime groups. Instead, we need to build a global system of norms and practices that fosters collaboration among the largest possible number of countries. We are convinced that the application of the Convention's provisions — especially those relating to mutual judicial assistance and extradition — effectively and thoroughly governs the most relevant aspects of this collaboration and will promote national police and judicial action to fight organized crime.

The two protocols support the functioning of the Convention with specific measures made necessary by the unique characteristics of transnational organized crime. Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, is a particularly heinous crime. The protocol on trafficking, which pays equal attention to the repression of illegal conduct and the protection of the victims, fills in many gaps in international law and provides an effective instrument for international cooperation.

The same holds true for the protocol against the smuggling of migrants. The Italian contribution to this legal instrument has been particularly relevant, as my Government, together with the Government of Austria, proposed the initial draft.

From a law-enforcement perspective, this protocol requires States to criminalize the activity of groups that, for the sake of profit, exploit the hardship of migrants, place them in life-threatening situations, arrange for them to be smuggled into countries and illegally facilitate their stay. In addition, Italy believes that the protocol's provisions covering the transportation of migrants over the seas should be considered of particular value, as this is one of the most dangerous forms of smuggling today.

While voicing my Government's satisfaction with the fact that it took less than two years to complete this enormous job, I express our hope that the negotiations on the protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in arms will be resumed shortly, so that a compromise on the most controversial points can be reached.

We must quickly follow up on our adoption of the Convention and its two protocols by implementing the provisions they contain. Otherwise, organized crime will seize upon our delays in enforcing such action and exploit our every weakness. Therefore the Italian Government hopes that all States will promptly sign and ratify the Convention. We appeal to Member States to come to Palermo in large numbers for the Signing Conference, and we urge them to be represented at the highest possible level.

If we wish to make the Convention and its protocols operative, it is not enough for their norms to enter into force. All States parties must take the necessary steps to adapt their legislation and their domestic institutions. Therefore Italy hopes that every necessary action can be taken at the United Nations to facilitate the implementation of these three instruments by the States parties, and Italy looks forward to the contribution that the political debate at the Palermo conference will offer to this goal.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico wishes to voice its satisfaction at the conclusion of the negotiations on the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and on the protocols to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, in particular women and children, and against illegal trafficking in migrants by land, sea and air, which complement the Convention. Nevertheless, we would like to place on record our profound concern at the lack of political will on the part of some States, which prevented the conclusion of a protocol on the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition.

The adoption of these instruments is undoubtedly a concrete step towards the practical implementation of the commitment entered into by the heads of State and Government during the Millennium Summit to intensify the struggle against transnational crime in all

its dimensions, including smuggling and illicit trafficking in human beings and money laundering.

In an increasingly interdependent world, organized criminal groups use increasingly sophisticated methods to make their activities transnational. The States cannot remain paralysed. We must have international cooperation to jointly combat transnational organized crime.

The Convention is a novel instrument, for it establishes a legal regime for the prevention of and fight against transnational organized crime, at the same times as it is broadly applicable and establishes mechanisms for international cooperation that are effective and will undoubtedly strengthen efforts in this field. The Convention and its protocols have a unified nature, but the three texts have to be examined in a differentiated manner, for they refer to aspects of criminality that have different features. Mexico successfully promoted recognition of these differences.

As far as Mexico is concerned, the essential purpose of preventing and combating the smuggling of persons, especially women and children, is to protect victims of exploitation for sexual reasons or for work. It is not only a matter of combating criminal groups. The protocol against the illicit trafficking in migrants is an instrument of international cooperation designed to prevent and combat this crime. It is not an instrument to control migration. Mexico supports the adoption of this protocol insofar as it is confined to the penal aspects of the illicit trafficking in migrants carried out by organized criminal groups. It protects the rights of the persons who are the objects of such trafficking and expressly establishes that migrants cannot be criminally prosecuted under the protocol, nor can proceedings be brought against third parties who have acted in good faith to support such migrants for humanitarian reasons or because of close family relationships.

As far as Mexico is concerned, illicit trafficking in migrants is an especially serious crime when it endangers the lives and security of the migrants.

The fight against transnational organized crime can only be effective to the extent that we suppress the manufacture and illicit trafficking in firearms. This is why we feel that the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate will not have been fully discharged until that protocol is adopted.

Mexico will continue to deploy the necessary efforts to ensure that the instrument becomes a reality at the beginning of the year 2001. As President Zedillo pointed out when the Inter-American Convention in this field was open for signing — and it is now in force — illicit trafficking in firearms, explosives and other destructive types of materials is a problem that has been affecting the security of many of our countries and the peace and quiet in our families and communities. This trade in violence promotes phenomena as serious as drug trafficking, which destroys and imposes its code of death and corruption. Organized crime commits kidnapping and violent attacks, threatens public security and commits acts of terrorism. All of this seeks to block the progress of democracy and enthrones dogmatism and intolerance.

With the adoption of the protocol, we will be taking an important step forward both in combating organized crime and in our efforts to regulate international trade in firearms. This Assembly has recognized the complementarity of activities to prevent and reduce the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms and light weapons and activities to combat the manufacture and illicit trafficking of firearms.

In order for the conference to be held in the year 2001 to benefit fully from the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, we must conclude this negotiation as soon as possible. We are committed to this goal, and we invite the States that still maintain reservations to reconsider their position and allow us to conclude this important protocol, the present version of which enjoys ample international support.

Mr. Karev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Nowadays the problem of crime has become a factor that cannot be neglected by any State that seeks to ensure the security, tranquillity and well-being of its citizens. Modern criminals long ago realized the true advantages of close international links, and they have not been slow to use them for their anti-social purposes, often keeping a few steps ahead of the forces of law and order.

In these conditions, the need to establish a single anti-crime front of States at the global level is becoming glaringly obvious. World society must create a system under which criminals will not be beyond the reach of the law in any country or be able to use their illicit proceeds. The Convention against Transnational

Organized Crime should form a reliable basis for this system. In just one and a half years, it has been possible to prepare a document to serve for decades as the fundamental instrument of international cooperation in combating crime. This is an indisputable indicator of the fact that, given the necessary will, we can achieve serious results in the anti-crime sphere in a very short time.

We regard the adoption by the current General Assembly session of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime as a big success for the United Nations. In this connection, we would like to note the big contribution to the attainment of this goal made by the Chairman of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee, Luigi Lauriola, the members of the Bureau and members of the Centre for International Crime Prevention. We are glad that the Convention covers a broad range of crimes, including money laundering, corruption and membership in organized criminal groups.

It is important that the document contains detailed arrangements for the provision of reciprocal legal assistance, extradition and measures to protect witnesses and victims of crime. We are sure that these and other provisions of the Convention will enhance the quality of the work of the law enforcement agencies of our countries and cooperation between them at a qualitatively higher level. We also welcome the adoption of additional protocols to the Convention on such pressing problems as trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants. We hope that work on the additional protocol on combating illicit trafficking in firearms will be successfully completed in a very short time.

No less important than the adoption of this Convention is the question of its speedy entry into force and the beginning of its effective functioning. This process will be given a vigorous start in December of this year at the high-level political conference for signing this document. We are grateful to the Government of Italy for offering to host this forum in Palermo.

In conclusion, we would like to confirm once again that the Russian Federation will continue to make maximum efforts to combat the criminal threat and promote the strengthening of cooperation among States in combating crime.

Mr. Rydzkowski (Poland): At the outset, allow me to express the satisfaction of the Polish Government on the adoption by the General Assembly, to take place shortly, of the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Since Poland is a European Union associated country, it fully subscribes to the statement of the Presidency of the Union just made by the representative of France.

I would like only to make some additional remarks. As it is widely known, Poland was the country that started the practical work on the Convention in terms of its concept and implementation. Although the idea of a multilateral convention against organized crime goes back to the Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan against Organized Transnational Crime, adopted by the World Ministerial Conference in Italy in 1994, it was the Polish President, Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, who presented the first draft of the future convention to the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly on 24 September 1996.

Following this initiative, the Polish Government invited a group of international experts to Warsaw in February 1998 to start preliminary discussions on the convention. Although the efforts to elaborate an international instrument designed specifically to fight transnational organized crime had already been part of history, the Warsaw meeting marked an important breakthrough in two respects. First and foremost, the issue of drafting such a multilateral convention was no longer addressed as a "whether or not" question but became one of "how". It was also the first time that representatives of more than 50 States unanimously agreed to have an effective tool to combat transnational organized crime in its most dangerous transnational dimension. Moreover, when considering different approaches, delegations focused on identifying areas of emerging consensus.

Today, when we are approaching the fourth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on this matter, we are especially pleased that the process is over and that the General Assembly is able to adopt one of the most important international legal instruments of our time. This adoption reflects fully the conviction that no single State can successfully suppress organized crime, even within its own borders.

The new legal instrument is of a unique character because, for the first time, it delivers in a precise manner the definition of the phenomenon of transnational organized crime and defines instruments of an effective fight against uncivil society. The adoption of the convention and its two additional protocols after only three and a half years of work is a significant achievement and reflects the political will of the international community to combat the increased threat posed by organized crime. We hope that the new convention will fulfil the expectations of Governments and law enforcement authorities and become an efficient and effective tool of cooperation between States on all levels.

From the practical point of view, the adoption of a legal instrument is only a beginning. Now we are on the threshold of the next step — the implementation of the convention and its two protocols. Before us is the signing ceremony in Palermo, the difficult process of national ratification and implementation at the international and national levels. At this point, it is necessary to stress that the full implementation of the convention will be possible only when it is done on a universal basis, which means that resources will be necessary to assist those States which are not able to fight organized crime by themselves.

As one of the initiators of the work on the convention against transnational organized crime, Poland expresses the hope that the existing spirit of cooperation will be extended to the process of ratification and that we will shortly have the 40 ratifying States necessary for the convention's entry into force. We also express hope that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime will able to finish its work on the third protocol, covering the problem of illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms. We are of the opinion that the convention and its three related protocols constitute a set and that, without one of them, an efficient fight against organized crime will not be possible.

Before concluding, I would like to express our appreciation to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Luigi Lauriola, and the other members of the Bureau for their dedication and hard work. Special thanks go to the Centre for International Crime Prevention, without which the conclusion of the work would not have been possible. We also thank the government of Argentina, which organized the second meeting of the intergovernmental group of experts, and other countries which contributed to the work on the convention at different stages.

The President: The Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has asked to take the floor again. I call on him.

Mr. Lauriola (Italy), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: I apologize for taking the floor again, but, according to procedure, I have to read out a few corrections to the text of the draft resolution.

As I have already said, there will be some correction to operative paragraph 3 of the draft resolution, in which the words "summary records" are to be replaced by the words "a comprehensive report".

In operative paragraph 11, we are to delete the words "and under the direction of" and to add at the end of the paragraph "in accordance with paragraph 33 of the Convention". This is just to make the draft resolution consistent with the language and the practice of the United Nations.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by the Committee Chairman.

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Perfiliev (Director, General Assembly and ECOSOC Affairs Division): Before taking action on the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, I should like to inform members that, first, in connection with operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, the Assembly would request the Ad Hoc Committee to continue its work in relation to the draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts, component and ammunition, and to finalize such work as soon as possible. This request would imply the need to convene an additional session of the Ad Hoc Committee in 2001. The Secretariat estimates that the session would

last five working days and that interpretation and documentation in the six official languages would be required. These conference servicing requirements are estimated to amount to $187,600 at full cost.

Provisions have been made in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 not only for meetings already programmed at the time of budget preparation, but also for meetings or extensions of meetings that might be authorized subsequently, provided that the number and distribution of meetings were consistent with the pattern of meetings of past years.

On that basis, no additional appropriation would be required under section 2, concerning General Assembly affairs and conference services, of the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 as a result of the request contained in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution.

In operative paragraph 11, the Secretary-General would be requested to designate the Centre for International Crime Prevention to serve as a secretariat for the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in accordance with article 33 of the Convention. Given the complex nature and wide scope of the functions that the secretariat will have to perform, it is considered that the current staff resources of the Centre for International Crime Prevention would eventually need to be strengthened. It is not possible to assess at this stage the necessary staffing resources which would enable the Centre to fulfil its functions in accordance with article 33. The Secretariat would be in a position to make such assessment in the light of the recommendations which the Ad Hoc Committee will make at the preparatory meeting to be held before the first session of the Conference of the Parties, and of the decisions that the Conference of the Parties will take at its first session.

Given the importance attached by delegations to the convention, the secretariat estimates that the convention may enter into force in the biennium 2002-2003 and that the first session of the Conference of the Parties would be held in 2003. On the basis of this assumption, the Secretariat would include related proposals in the 2002-2003 programme budget.

In operative paragraph 12 of the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would be requested to provide the Centre for International Crime Prevention with the resources necessary to carry out its work related to the implementation of the convention, to the servicing of the Conference of the Parties and to the support to be provided to the Ad Hoc Committee. The attention of delegations is drawn to the provisions of resolution 45/248, part B, VI, in which the General Assembly, first, reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters; secondly, reaffirmed also the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions; thirdly, expressed its concern at the tendency of its substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters; and, fourthly, invited the Secretary-General to provide all intergovernmental bodies with the required information regarding procedures for administrative and budgetary matters.

In the absence of any provision in the draft resolution or in the Convention regarding the funding of the Conference of the Parties, the Secretariat assumes that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties would be financed from the United Nations regular budget. It is therefore the intention of the Secretary-General to include in his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 appropriate resources for the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the Ad Hoc Committee acting as a preparatory committee to the first session of the Conference of the Parties. It is also the understanding of the Secretariat that the meetings of the Conference of the Parties and of the Ad Hoc Committee would be held in Vienna in accordance with the provision of resolution 40/243 of 8 December 1985.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution entitled "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime", recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by its Chairman.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in paragraph 121 of its report, as orally corrected by its Chairman?

The draft resolution, as orally corrected by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the

Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, was adopted (resolution 55/25)

The President: Before calling on the representative of Japan for an explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind the Assembly that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Nobuyasu (Japan): Today, 15 November 2000, marks a historic, giant step by the world in its fight against organized crime. The General Assembly has just adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the two related protocols. Japan wholeheartedly welcomes this historic step and expresses its appreciation to Ambassador Luigi Lauriola and all the other officers of the Ad Hoc Committee, all the delegations, members of the Secretariat and the interpreters who worked, burning the midnight oil, to finish the work to elaborate these important international instruments throughout the long, difficult negotiations.

For its part, Japan joined the efforts to conclude the negotiations, serving as one of the Vice-Chairs, hosting a number of preparatory meetings and providing moral, political and financial support to facilitate the work of the participants. Japan notes with great regret, however, that agreement was not reached on a draft protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, in order to supplement the Convention. The task still remains, therefore, for the Ad Hoc Committee to complete the work on the firearms protocol as soon as possible. Japan is determined to continue its active endeavour to bring the negotiation on the protocol to a successful conclusion for its adoption by the Assembly early next year.

As to the Convention and the two protocols that we have just adopted, Japan looks forward to the signing conference in Palermo next month and expresses its appreciation to the great contribution that the Italian Government is offering. It is now incumbent upon the world community to ensure that those instruments have as universal an application as possible and to spread their effective implementation around the world.

In order to help build capacity in the field of criminal justice in developing countries in particular, Japan is prepared to hold seminars or training courses and continue to contribute to the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Fund. As a starter, Japan is hosting an Asia-Pacific law enforcement conference against transnational organized crime in January next year.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 105.

Agenda item 42

Special session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children

Report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43 (Parts I and II))

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/429)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.34)

The President: It is my pleasure to address this plenary meeting on an agenda item of high importance for the General Assembly — its special session on children, to be held in 2001.

This special session is of personal interest to me. In September 1990, I had the honour of representing my country at the World Summit for Children. On that occasion, an unprecedented dialogue among 71 world leaders led to a universal appeal to ensure a better future for every child. I had the opportunity of being directly involved in helping galvanize political will at the highest level through an action-oriented agenda devoted to the most fragile component of the social fabric — our children.

Ten years after that unique experience, I share with many the feeling that significant progress has been achieved — and yet many challenges remain in front of us.

As a result of the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, attention to children has indeed increased. A vast majority of countries have now ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The needs and rights of children have also been the subject of major United Nations events held during the 1990s such as the international conferences on population, on

women, on social development and on human settlements.

However, the suffering of millions of children around the world shows that the goals and commitments of the World Summit for Children remain far from fulfilled. More effective policies and programmes in more countries are urgently required to keep the promise made to children in September 1990.

At the beginning of the new millennium, we are confident that focusing on our children as the most vulnerable and cherished part of our societies, we can agree on effective actions to ensure their survival, protection, full development and participation.

In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders renewed the global commitment to children by addressing such specific issues as eradicating poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality, ensuring assistance and protection in cases of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, as well the imperative to give all children, including girls, a basic education of good quality.

This plenary session is an important step towards this global commitment in considering the process leading to the special session in September 2001, delegations might wish to bear in mind the spirit, which prevailed during the Summit in 1990. As world leaders then declared "there can be no task nobler than giving every child a better future."

I should like to inform members that in a letter dated 21 September 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of the Holy See in the debate of agenda item 42 entitled "Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of the Holy See in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

The President: I should also like to inform members that, in a letter dated 6 October 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 42.

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on this item?

It was so decided.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) *(spoke in French)*: Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the special session on children, will be presenting draft resolution A/55/L.34 to the Assembly for its approval.

We thank her very warmly for her remarkable work and would also like to thank Ambassador Schumacher of the Federal Republic of Germany and the very many delegations that participated in the consultations. In this way they displayed their countries' firm commitment to improving the fate of children throughout the world.

The World Summit for Children in 1990 was the first of the great meetings and conferences held by the General Assembly in the decade that is now winding up. Ten years is time enough for Governments to obtain the statistics needed to review outcomes and evaluate progress achieved in the implementation of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and its Plan of Action, which were adopted in 1990.

This stocktaking should enable leaders to commit to new initiatives, which will then appear indispensable. It will also enable them to renew their support in fields where we have not achieved our objectives.

In this perspective the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the major legal instrument in the field of

human rights that has received the widest support and thus must remain the cornerstone and source of inspiration for everything we do in the future for children.

It seems to us entirely justified that we use the concept of life cycle proposed by the Secretary-General in his report when we study the rights and well-being of children and teenagers and that we decide together on future action, which will have to be specific, concrete and quantifiable in the three areas which I will now describe in greater detail.

A good start in life is important and the health and education of the mother will affect this good start. If there has been important progress, particularly as regards breast-feeding and access to health care, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the transmission of the virus from mother to child have posed a new challenge that we must meet. Global access to basic social services is also a major objective. Health and food are complementary.

The world campaign to eradicate polio is a symbol of what a united international community can achieve through solidarity. A good start also means not being denied the basic right to an identity and a nationality. Universal birth records must thus unreservedly be encouraged; they are fundamental.

Mr. Aboud (Comoros), Vice-President took the Chair.

Without education it is impossible to imagine eradicating poverty. It is our strongest card in the fight against poverty. In working through education for development, we are also reducing the risks of armed conflicts, of which children are often the main victims. We must therefore favour this area of action. What is the point of discussing universal access to information technology if the population does not benefit in the first place from the education required to make use of the great tool that computer science is? Developing States must then receive additional resources to bring about more general basic education, including computer science. Gender parity is of essential importance in this field. Statistics tend to show that an educated mother is an additional opportunity for her children to blossom.

An environment conducive to adolescents to enable them to fulfil their potential is important. The particularly difficult period of transition from childhood to adulthood demands that Governments hold a constructive dialogue with young people. A participatory approach is definitely to be favoured, particularly within the nucleus of the family. An encouraging environment for many teenagers who have only experienced violence, war and refugee camps includes, first and foremost, access to vocational training. Learning a trade means stability and the start of a normal existence. It will also protect them against exploitation in the workplace, prostitution or the use of drugs.

The financial resources and expertise to obtain these objectives exist, which the Preparatory Committee will define at the two forthcoming sessions to be held in January and June 2001.

The new challenges posed by economic globalization, the proliferation of armed conflict and the HIV/AIDS pandemic call for new responses that can only be achieved through deeper reflection and strengthened political commitment.

We must not forget that we will also have to adopt the necessary modalities to bring about the active and ongoing participation of non-governmental organizations, which work in the field with Government authorities, children and adolescents themselves. The Principality is studying the possibility of including youth and youth group representatives in its delegation to the special session.

My delegation also fully supports the special event planned by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to be held in parallel with the special session. We support the participation of children and teenagers, as well as actors from civil society and the private sector.

On the threshold of the decisive preparatory process for our children's future, we hope resolutely, working together and inspired by the same desire to contribute to the universal implementation of the rights of the child, that we will prepare the General Assembly to repeat the experience of 1990, in which everything seemed possible, and that on the eve of 21 September 2001, at the beginning of that night, the participants of the special session devoted to children will experience, not only the feeling of well-being that accomplishment brings, but also the firm conviction that the new objectives to be established will be within their grasp.

I cannot conclude my statement without expressing the Principality of Monaco's gratitude to the United Nations Children's Fund. Thanks to its unremitting activity, this organization is at the core of much of the progress achieved for the improvement of children's conditions in many parts of the world, particularly in the least developed countries, for which we are especially grateful.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Together with Canada, Egypt, Mali, Pakistan and Sweden, Mexico had the honour of sponsoring the World Summit for Children, held here in 1990. The national programmes of action drafted in accordance with the outcome of the World Summit have succeeded in consolidating States' commitment to protecting the rights of children and in encouraging the participation of broad sectors of society in the promotion of progress in the areas of health, education, environmental health and social assistance. Undoubtedly, these are positive steps in the right direction.

Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that the agreed commitments to international cooperation have not been fully implemented, nor have the shared targets been fully achieved. Despite important advances, many challenges undoubtedly remain. One challenge is basic: ensuring the benefits of globalization for children in the framework of genuine sustainable development, imbued with justice and equity.

At the Millennium Summit, our heads of State and Government made the great political commitment to ensure that by 2015 all the boys and girls throughout the world will be able to complete a full cycle of primary education and ensure that girls, as well as boys, will have equal access to all levels of education. At the Millennium Summit, Mexico signed the Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

With regard to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 2001 in follow-up to the World Summit for Children, Mexico wishes to emphasize the importance of focusing our efforts on translating into reality by concrete actions the letter and spirit of each of the great commitments made by the international community for children.

With these lofty purposes in mind, my country enthusiastically joined the Kingston consensus at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Jamaica last October, in preparation of the special session. This document underpins the region's political will to carry out concrete actions for the integrated development of children and it constitutes a valuable contribution to the special session preparatory process.

In implementation of the commitments entered into at the Summit, Mexico is continuing to pursue a State policy for children with the overall purpose of ensuring their survival and promoting their development and welfare, in addition to protecting women of child-bearing age. To that end, we have valuable mechanisms for discussion and coordination, such as the National Action Commission for Children, which is an inter-sectoral and inter-institutional body, and the National Action Programme for Children at the federal and state levels.

With regard to the immediate future, we have identified the need to continue to work in the following priority areas: first, to reduce maternal and child mortality; secondly, to improve information and access to family planning services; thirdly, to expand the coverage of basic services, including drinking water supply and sewerage in rural and urban marginalized areas; fourthly, to enhance the quality of education at all levels, including basic education, with a clear policy of gender equality; fifthly, to reduce the number of children who are victims of physical and psychological violence, neglect and injustice — especially among the indigenous population.

While reaffirming Mexico's commitment to the great task of international cooperation to fight for the survival and development of children, we express the hope that the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children will help to consolidate a major global alliance to achieve our common objectives. If we are to secure lasting success, and especially if we are to extend that success to the most marginalized areas and people, it is important to promote integrated programmes and more effective measures against poverty. At the same time, national efforts must be supported by redoubled international cooperation. Mexico will continue to work hard and with commitment to attain those goals. In that spirit, Mexico has joined the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.34, which will be introduced by Ambassador Durrant, the Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the preparatory process for the 2001 special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the recommendations of the World Summit for Children (A/55/429). I would also like to convey my thanks to the Preparatory Committee for its report, contained in parts I and II of document A/55/43, and to express my gratitude for the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its Executive Director, Ms. Carol Bellamy, to affirm the rights of children and to develop their potential and abilities. I reaffirm my country's full commitment to supporting every effort to give the necessary attention to the situation of children, as they are the essence of the future and the hope for progress.

Focusing on the physical, mental and psychological development of children is an economic and social duty incumbent upon all the countries and cultures of the world, irrespective of their levels of economic development and scientific advancement. It also represents an investment in the future, as today's children are tomorrow's leaders.

Egypt believes that the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basic framework for all programmes and strategies aimed at promoting children's welfare and protecting their full rights throughout the world. A matter of both pride and joy for my delegation is the fact that, for the first time in the history of human rights mechanisms, we have achieved near universality in ratifying the Convention. The attainment of 191 ratifications attests to the international commitment to protect the rights and potential of children, promote their interests and safeguard their dignity.

Egypt is pleased to have been among the first States to adhere to this international Convention on children. Our President is also gratified to issue the proclamation of the Second Decade for the Protection and Care of Egyptian Children, which will be celebrated from 2000-2010. That document included every necessary social, cultural and legislative element to ensure the development of children, their potential and capabilities through the concerted efforts of governmental and non-governmental bodies. Egypt has stressed its commitment to promote the rights of children by establishing the National Maternity and Childhood Council, providing encouragement to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) interested in the rights, education and health of children, and making available care and services for special children, such as the handicapped, the sick and orphans.

Child labour is considered one of the most important issues related to the rights of the child. In that regard, my delegation would like to express its reservations regarding any attempt to exploit the humanitarian aspect of child labour in order to impose protectionist or trade measures on the exports of developing countries, instead of trying to find a real solution to this social phenomenon by encouraging Governments' efforts to put an end to child labour and by setting up serious programmes for rehabilitating those children involved.

Egypt believes that it is important to deal with the issue of child labour in a comprehensive manner, as this issue is linked to the prevalence of poverty in societies and to the rights of people to development. My country's steadfast position in this regard is reflected in the following three elements. First, we object to any attempt to link respect for basic labour criteria to international trade under the guise of children's rights. Secondly, it is important to develop significant vocational training programmes aimed at children who leave the education system so as to allow them to contribute positively to their countries. Thirdly, we must call on donor countries to contribute to vocational programmes.

Egypt encourages the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF to continue to lend their attention to child labour within the context of cooperating with the developing countries concerned. Part of Egypt's promotion of the protection of children was to ban children from taking part in hazardous work and to develop databases to track child labour. Egypt has also established networks of trade unions, employers and NGOs to monitor current legislation.

My delegation welcomes the adoption of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Despite the achievements registered in the past decade, developments have taken place that have adversely affected children. These include economic crises, debt crises, the spread of epidemics, and the exacerbation of the problem of sexual trafficking in children and of child prostitution.

One of the most dangerous of these phenomena is the spread of armed conflict and the fact that civilians are often most affected. This has led to international efforts to ban the recruitment of children in armed conflict, to protect them from organized violence, to rehabilitate them and to return them to their families and homeland.

I should like to point out here the importance of the protection of children and respect for their basic rights, in particular the right to life, physical well-being and development, especially in occupied territories and in areas of armed conflict. In this connection, I believe that an end should be put to all violence and military acts directed against children in the occupied Arab territories. Israeli forces continue to kill Palestinian children and to ignore their cries for help. Those children are living under very difficult circumstances, and their plight weighs on the conscience of humanity.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of bringing to a successful conclusion the special session of the General Assembly, to be held in 2001, to follow up on the recommendations of the World Summit for Children. We hope that this will support the global solidarity aimed at promoting the rights of children by encouraging cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations in this area. We further hope that the international community will intensify its efforts to mobilize the necessary funds and the political will to protect children, who are the mainstay of the present and the hope for peace for the future.

Egypt is prepared to offer its full cooperation to this end. The children deserve no less.

Mr. Khare (India): At the outset, we would like to commend the Permanent Representative of Jamaica and the members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee for their tireless efforts in ensuring the success of the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/55/429), which clearly brings out the need for mobilization of additional resources to break the cycle of poverty in one generation.

India's achievement of the World Summit goals has been positive, if not total. Certain areas which call for mission-oriented goals — for example, immunization or water supply — depend on resources and the provision of services, whereas other goals are more complex and require attitudinal changes at the community level and convergence from several sectors and civil society partners. Democratic and open processes of decision-making and implementation require time for consensus-building and for motivating people.

Understandably, such processes take longer and are more difficult to bring to fruition, although, of course, the gains obtained in a democratic set-up, with the participation of all, are certainly more permanent and easier to sustain. Under these circumstances, India has made appreciable progress towards goals such as immunization and literacy, whereas there has been less progress in areas such as sanitation and the combat against malnutrition. The commitment and continued perseverance of the Government is firm, and we are confident that we are progressing on the right track, recognizing the need for decentralization and convergence as two important planks for achieving these goals.

State programmes of action on children in all major states were devised after the National Plan of Action was finalized in 1992. The process of preparation of the state programmes, in which a rights-based approach has been adopted, has allowed subnational planning and ownership, and mobilization of resources at the local level. We are already implementing the National Plan of Action for the Girl Child, prepared in the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Decade of the Girl Child (1991-2000), under which specific goals for girl children are given special attention.

India has undertaken, with the cooperation of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 53 multiple-indicator cluster surveys (MICS) at the state and union territory levels to obtain information on more than 80 indicators relevant to the condition of women and children. The second National Family Health Survey and the second generation of multiple-indicator cluster surveys, together with a number of existing and ongoing data-collection systems, will provide reliable information on progress towards World Summit goals at both the national and subnational levels, and for preparing future actions that are based on more accurate data.

We have participated actively and constructively with other delegations in both sessions of the Preparatory Committee in February and May this year and have carefully read its reports, contained in document A/55/43. During this process, we have carefully listened to the statements of other delegations and have learnt from their experiences. Our views on the key issues and trends that should be the focus of our attention as we approach the special session are well known. We would therefore very briefly refer to only some of them.

We believe that the outcome of the special session should be a focused, intergovernmentally negotiated document which must be concise, short and action-oriented. Some of the key ingredients that we would wish to see in this document are the following.

First, steps should be taken to implement the unfinished agenda of the World Summit for Children, including crucial questions related to the mobilization of resources. Second, agreement should be reached on the efforts required at all levels for the eradication of poverty. The central feature of our future actions in the twenty-first century should be to break the vicious circle of poverty that creates, and recreates, undernourished infants, poorly educated young children and marginalized adolescents, and leads to unsafe and premature motherhood, all of which fundamentally undermine the fulfilment of individual rights.

Third, a strategy is needed to combat malnutrition intergenerationally in children and infants, in adolescents, and in pregnant and lactating mothers. Fourth, there must be a reiteration of the importance of literacy and education, including the promotion of the values of compassion, tolerance and caring — values which were resoundingly endorsed by our heads of State or Government in the Millennium Declaration.

Fifth, we must focus on improving the quality of the water supply and on the provision of better sanitation facilities. Sixth, a focus is also required on the special needs of adolescents, whose increasing numbers represent a particularly important challenge. And seventh, attention must be given to children in special circumstances, including those affected by terrorism and armed conflict, as well as child labour; street children; delinquent children; and children affected by HIV/AIDS.

In all of these areas, special attention should be accorded to the girl child, whose growth and development are of paramount importance for the well-being of the children of the next generation. Only this approach can possibly secure appreciable gains within a single generation.

The involvement of the community, not only in structuring the future programmes, but also in their implementation and monitoring, is also of great importance.

In the belief that the special session will contribute to the creation of a future of hope and fulfilment for all the world's children, we have co-sponsored the draft resolution to be introduced by Ambassador Durrant, Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee, and we look forward to receiving the draft of the proposed outcome from the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee as early as possible, to ensure its early finalization.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Ten years after the World Summit, the time is now right for the world to renew its commitment to children. With its near-universal ratification, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has undoubtedly become the centrepiece for international and national action to protect and promote the rights of the child. Moreover, the goals of the Convention have been significantly bolstered this year by the two landmark Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. However, global mobilization is required to ensure the spirit of the letter is transformed into reality. Ratification of these instruments alone will not suffice. The well-being of children requires political action at the highest level, action that places children at the heart of every political, social and economic agenda.

The special session of the General Assembly on children next year has a decisive role to play in providing the international community with a unique opportunity to take stock of its achievements to date and to prepare itself for the evolving challenges to be faced by children in the future. More importantly, it is envisaged to be the most representative gathering for children the world has ever seen. In a most fundamental manner, this in itself will act as a catalyst to restore the momentum needed to establish a long-term strategy with updated goals, thus bringing the

Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children into the twenty-first century. The modalities for achieving this must be reviewed in the context of evolving challenges, on the one hand, and of lessons learned, on the other. Additionally, we should draw from other initiatives which attempt to define a broad framework of action with time-bound goals for Governments in partnership with other actors, such as the global Polio Eradication Initiative.

The Republic of Croatia attaches particular importance to viewing the special session as a comprehensive process rather than just as an event per se. We see this process as issuing a clarion call for integral social change, dissemination and dialogue, as well as for raising awareness among all sectors of society. It is here particularly that the preparatory process, such as the national governmental reviews, will play a crucial role as a vehicle by which we will identify and determine future policies for children. Furthermore, the outcomes of regional events and national efforts will substantively enrich the whole process, as well as the final outcome of the special session itself.

In this respect, a national working group has been established in the Republic of Croatia with the exclusive mandate to prepare for active participation in and follow-up to the special session. Furthermore, under the new Government, a programme of change in the Republic of Croatia has been instituted which is committed to building a civil society under which particular attention is being given to children and youth for their harmonious development in a secure and favourable environment. With this in mind, the Republic of Croatia looks forward to working closely with all relevant actors under the competent guidance of the United Nations Children's Fund, as the substantive secretariat, in concerting its efforts and political commitment towards ensuring a successful agenda for this special session.

Our children are the future of the world, and the millennium that is open in front of us belongs in essence to them. We all want to make a difference for our future generations, and our efforts must not stop with the special session. Hence, promoting children's rights must remain high on the agenda. Transforming this global commitment into a real challenge for children remains a task that must engage everyone. The seeds of new approaches are often to be found in the children themselves, and their interests must considered. If we are wise enough to allow them to play their role in the whole process — and if this is coupled with real commitment on the part of all other pertinent actors — then perhaps we will be ready to make long-term investments to guarantee the best interests of all our children in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have been participating with great interest in the preparatory process for the special session to follow up on the World Summit for Children, which is to be held next September. The review of the commitments undertaken in the September 1990 World Summit for Children Declaration regarding the survival, protection and development of the child should lead us to a careful evaluation of the commitments made then that have yet to be fulfilled, of what has to be done in order to make real progress towards their fulfilment, of the new challenges facing our children in the new millennium and of how the international community can now address these challenges.

We must shoulder our responsibility for the present and future of humanity. We must avoid leaving our children the rubble of a modern civilization that is succumbing to extreme poverty, curable diseases and the tragic and ever-expanding AIDS pandemic; to malnutrition and high rates of infant mortality; to armed conflicts and wars of all types; to the sale of and trafficking in minors for whatever purposes; to child prostitution and the physical and sexual abuse of children, paedophilia, the use of children in pornography and sexual tourism; to the illicit sale of human tissues and organs for transplants; to the exploitation of child labour and the lack of future prospects for children who wander and live in the streets in the company of drugs and delinquency.

The statistics offer eloquent proof of the reality that confronts many children in the world today. More than 11 million boys and girls under the age of five die every year from diseases that in the overwhelming majority of cases were preventable. In the third world 64 children out of every thousand live births die before they reach one year of age. In the developing countries as a whole, the mortality rate for children under five is 95 per thousand live births. Two out of five children in third world countries suffer from stunted growth, and one out of three are underweight for their age. Two million girls are forced into prostitution. In the developing countries about 250 million children under the age of 15 have to work in order to survive. In

addition, there is the tragic effect on children and young people of the AIDS pandemic, which to date has taken the lives of almost 4 million children under the age of 15, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa. At the end of 1999, 13.2 million children under the age of 15 throughout the world had lost a mother or both parents to AIDS. By the same date, 860,000 children in sub-Saharan Africa had lost their teachers to this disease.

The efforts at the national level must be accompanied by a new philosophy of international solidarity that will make it possible to generate the necessary resources to help developing countries implement their national plans to follow up on the Summit. To this end, official development assistance (ODA) must finally reach the goals to which the developed countries have committed themselves. The commitment to "collective responsibility", undertaken by our heads of State in the Millennium Declaration, must be translated into reality.

If we really want to bring about a world in which boys and girls enjoy their rights, we have to change the unfair global economic order, which works for 20 per cent of the population but excludes and degrades the remaining 80 per cent. The scourge of the external debt undermines the right to development of the countries of the South, destabilizing their economies and forcing them to divert their scarce resources to external debt repayment and servicing, to the detriment of economic and social development. As UNICEF has rightly said, indebtedness has the face of a child, because children pay the highest price for its damaging consequences.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report on the preparations for the special session, globalization has had negative impacts; it has brought about tremendous exclusion for children. The challenge is to transform this process into a positive force, whose benefits would reach all on an equal footing and would bring about economic and social development for all, and not only for the wealthiest and most advanced countries, as it has up to now.

The key to progress towards resolving the most serious problems of our children is still to eliminate poverty, malnutrition and disease. Even if we have to redouble our efforts to bring about the harmonious and integral development of children as human beings, we cannot give up our efforts to bring about progress in their education and training, in the active participation of children and teenagers in processes of direct importance to them, and in the struggle to secure the requisite social services for all, a realistic objective for a significant percentage of children in the world, unfortunately reduced to mere survival.

In the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the commitments undertaken by the international community to confront the serious problems and needs of children and teenagers in the world are more important than ever. In this sense, Cuba welcomes the adoption this year of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the participation of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, prostitution and child pornography, which we have signed as part of our policy of cooperation with human rights instruments and as part of our firm commitment to the progress and well-being of children.

With deep pride, we point to the progress that has been made in my country with regard to children. From the beginning of life, in Cuba no effort is spared to ensure that each child — boy or girl — has access to integral development. All Cuban children and youth have free access to schools and teachers. Over the past 40 years, excellent doctors have been trained, as well as paramedical personnel, who, in addition to protecting the health and welfare of the Cuban population on a cost-free basis, have given generous help in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Despite the economic war waged against my country for nearly four decades through the illegal and criminal blockade by the United States Government, Cuba has shown that it is possible to carry out social assistance programmes, based on the principles of equality and social justice. Cuba has made remarkable achievements, such as eliminating illiteracy, raising school attendance to 98 per cent in basic education up to ninth grade, and reducing infant mortality to 6.4 in every thousand live births. We also have a child immunization programme that averts 12 diseases preventable by vaccination. The vaccination programme has enabled us to completely eradicate diphtheria, poliomyelitis, neo-natal and infantile tetanus, meningitis and tuberculosis, among other curable diseases.

Between 9 and 13 October last, the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas was held in Kingston, Jamaica. This preparatory regional meeting for the special session for

follow-up to the World Summit produced the Kingston consensus. My country supports the consensus and is committed to working on its basis with the other countries of the region, to provide input for the outcome document of the review process.

Finally, José Martí, Cuba's national hero, said "Children are the hope of the world". It is our historic collective responsibility to return hope to the millions of children who are without it now.

Mr. Picasso (Peru) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Ten years after the World Summit for Children, we can assert that the Latin American and Caribbean region has made important progress with regard to the goals set in 1990. This should lead us to reflect that the international community should understand that the development and protection of the rights of children are an essential part of human development, not only because of their high ethical and moral content, but because the promotion and defence of children are essential to the social and economic growth of any society.

At the regional level, the Children's Summit and the Convention on the Rights of the Child promoted a series of social changes designed to bring about greater respect for and recognition of the rights of children and youth, reflected in an improvement in the standards of living of these two groups. The experience of these years shows us that political commitment and setting specific goals have a great mobilizing effect, to which we can add, among other outstanding elements, coordinated work with grassroots organizations and movements dedicated to children and youth.

As a result of Government priorities in public policy in the social area, successive unpublicized ministerial meetings of persons responsible for children were held in order to evaluate policy and share and promote national policies and commitments at the international level. This mechanism has been very useful in strengthening the interest of countries in this sensitive area, as well as in taking advantage of experience in different societies.

In 1998, Peru was the venue of the fourth Ministerial Conference of the Americas on Children and Social Policies, which offered an opportunity for the countries of the region to reaffirm their commitment to continue applying their best efforts to the needs and priorities of infants and adolescents. This responsibility brought with it assumption of the task of serving as regional temporary secretariat on children. During the past two years, we have continued to need to count on integral regional work, enabling us to know the specific achievements and goals of the last decade. For this purpose, we worked jointly with an inter-agency committee headed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to transform this task into a reality. With the contributions of the countries of the Latin American and Caribbean region, we were able to deliver this report at the last Ministerial Meeting of the decade, held a few weeks ago in Kingston, Jamaica. We believe that this supports our work, and we will, of course, soon share it with all United Nations Member States.

The outcome of the fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Jamaica, is also relevant for having provided the region with another opportunity to evaluate and compare experience related to progress and problems in their respective national programmes. On that occasion, we adopted a document entitled the Kingston Consensus, which not only reflects the regional plan of action on this subject, but also contains a set of specific guidelines for the negotiating process on the special session on children to be held in New York in September next year.

Children and young people in Latin America and the Caribbean today enjoy a higher probability of survival, of living in homes provided with basic services, of being fed healthy food and of attending school. We must acknowledge, however, that no marked progress has been achieved in terms of maternal mortality and the reduction of illiteracy. These are spheres that involve mainly women, but which have an impact on the family and on the life of the nation. This reflects the fact that gender differences continue to influence such basic areas as nutrition, primary education and survival, among others.

On a national level, the progress that my Government has been making to improve the quality of life of boys, girls and adolescents in general has depended on the valuable participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations. This has been articulated through the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Human Development. This sector assumes the duties of a governing body of the national system for the comprehensive care of children and youth. It works with decentralized public institutions in the sectors of health, education, labour, and justice, as well as with local Governments and administrative units in each

sector. It thereby seeks to be directly in touch with the needs of the community in order to address its problems and needs and to prevent violations of and promote the basic rights of individuals, particularly during infancy and adolescence. To that end, the Government has designed the 1996-2000 national plan of action for children, the 1998-2000 national nutrition and food plan and the 1998-2002 national population plan. The goal of the national plan of action for children is to promote and safeguard the full application of the rights of boys and girls and to contribute to a poverty-eradication strategy with survival, development and protection as its goals.

To briefly refer to the legal sphere of protection, a new code for children and adolescents has recently been enacted. Since 1993, public defender offices for children and adolescents have been operating to safeguard the rights recognized by legislation, focusing on the elimination of child abuse and domestic violence. They also perform counselling and information work.

The protection and development of children and youth entail the elimination of violence against women and within the family, since violence is the result of the asymmetric relationship caused by inequality. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the status of women and disadvantaged groups by raising their standards of living, thus allowing them better access to and opportunities for development.

In the area of education, the Constitution guarantees access to mandatory education at the initial, primary and secondary levels. Education is free of charge in government institutions at the various levels, including the higher level of public universities. Among the priorities of the Peruvian Government in this field are the elimination of illiteracy and the promotion of intercultural education to preserve the varied cultural and linguistic expressions of the country. In this sense, I wish to mention that our national literacy programme received the King Sejong Literacy Prize from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 1999 for having introduced elements for the prevention of family violence, reproductive health and entrepreneurial management into the curriculum. To improve the quality of education, we seek to expand educational coverage, to reduce the percentage of boys, girls and youth who are compelled to enter school at a late age, and to lower the dropout rate.

The national programme to care for orphans of terrorist violence was created in 1999 to offer comprehensive protection through social, productive and psychological development activities for children and youth affected by the terrorist violence that was a scourge of the country for many years.

Finally, with regard to child labour, an ongoing subject of international debate, Peru does not permit teenagers to work full-time. However, our reality is not fully in accordance with the standards, since it is very difficult to achieve a change in mentality and to outlaw traditional practices. That is why campaigns are under way to make the community aware of the rights of boys, girls and youths. We are also developing programmes to discourage child labour and to protect working conditions for teenagers.

The interest of the Peruvian Government in promoting and protecting the rights of boys, girls and youths is also reflected in its recent signing of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the participation of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Lastly, I wish to reassert Peru's commitment to the promotion and protection of boys, girls and adolescents, a measure that must be undertaken with the greatest responsibility, for it is a moral obligation to coming generations, the citizens of the future and the richest potential of any society.

Mr. Doutriaux (France) (*spoke in French*): I speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

The World Summit for Children, which coincided with the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, marked a very important and ambitious stage in the process of improving the welfare of children in the world. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was in itself one of the most important outcomes of the last decade in terms of the implementation of the rights of the child throughout the world.

The World Summit for Children stood out from the other international conferences and meetings on social issues held over the past 10 years, first by virtue of the concise and specific nature of the undertakings contained in the World Declaration and Plan of Action, and secondly by virtue of the measures to follow up and oversee progress achieved, in the form of both a mid-term review in 1996 and a regular report to the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) every year since 1992.

The special session of the General Assembly to be held next year as a follow-up to the World Summit should, like the Summit itself, be innovative in its approach, ambitious in its targets, pragmatic in its results and totally focused on seeking ways to improve the situation of children.

The European Union is glad that even before the convening of this special session significant decisions to benefit children have been taken at the United Nations recently. In particular, there was the General Assembly's adoption in May of the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Similarly, the adoption by the General Conference in June 1999 of the International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour is a major development for the rights of children. The European Union calls on all States to sign, ratify and implement these new instruments as soon as possible.

The Millennium Declaration, adopted by the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit, contains several important commitments concerning the rights of the child, covering access to education; reducing maternal and infant mortality; combating communicable diseases, in particular AIDS; assistance for children orphaned by AIDS; sustainable development; and protection of the rights of the child. The Millennium Declaration also underlines the importance of protecting children against the consequences of armed conflict. The European Union is convinced that these commitments, which complement those of the World Summit for Children, should be taken fully into account in preparations for the special session in 2001, when the international community will be asked to renew its determination to improve the rights and welfare of children.

The European Union sets great store by the completion of an objective, accurate and uncompromising review of the implementation, 10 years on, of the undertakings entered into at the World Summit. The national reports which States have been requested to forward to the Secretariat of the Preparatory Committee by December will be a vital source of information in conducting such a review. The European Union hopes that the Secretariat will receive many such reports, with statistical annexes, so that the fullest and most accurate review possible can be made with a view to discussions of the subject at the next Preparatory Committee meeting and at the special session itself.

The European Union believes that, as well as reviewing the last 10 years in terms of the commitments made and targets set at the World Summit, next year's special session should also take account of the new or emerging child-related problems which were not properly dealt with in 1990. The emerging issues include poverty; armed conflict and other forms of violence; discrimination, particularly against women and girls; and AIDS and its devastating implications for the situation of children. One of the conclusions of a recent seminar in Africa on the question of the rights of the child and AIDS was that children and young people were particularly exposed to infection owing to the lack of proper sex education. The European Union considers it crucial that children and pre-pubescent youngsters should be given sound and appropriate information on their rights and their sexual health. We also believe that we should step up our efforts on matters on which we have been taking action for longer, but which are still a priority, such as combating child labour or promoting better access to education for children, particularly girls.

The European Union, as it has already stated at the initial preparatory meetings, hopes that all the institutions concerned in one way or another with children, both inside and outside the United Nations system, will become involved. We are also keen to see the participation of experts, research bodies and academic institutions that take an interest in children's issues.

And of course children themselves, who are the most concerned, must be able to make their voices clearly heard in the preparation of the decisions concerning them, and must be assured of a significant role in the special session. That children have a right to

express themselves is one of the commitments made by the signatories of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the preparatory process and the special session seems to us essential to the full success of the session. In this context, we welcome the proposals adopted by the Preparatory Committee on the accreditation of NGOs. We hope that the issue of how NGOs are to participate in the September 2001 session will rapidly be resolved in a way which will enable them to play their full part in a debate in which their experience and commitment to children are indispensable.

We feel that preparatory conferences at the regional level can play an essential part in ensuring the widest possible preparation for the September 2001 deadline and in effectively mobilizing all the participants. The European Union welcomes the fact that such meetings have been scheduled in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As part of its own preparation, the European Union has planned several meetings designed to consolidate its regional approach to children's issues. One such meeting is the seminar I have already mentioned, which was recently organized with the African countries on the rights of the child and AIDS. On 20 November, the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a meeting in Paris of all European Ministers responsible for children will give a European dimension to Universal Children's Day. This will provide the opportunity for an appraisal of how the Convention on the Rights of the Child is being applied in relation to certain jointly determined issues and to launch initiatives to step up member States' cooperation with regard to children. Next year further similar meetings will be held in the European context.

We expect the special session to adopt a clear, concise final document, which should reflect the political will of the international community and not only reaffirm the validity of the commitments already entered into, but also propose the necessary measures to overcome the obstacles encountered in implementing the 1990 Plan and launch new action on the basis of the emerging issues.

In this context, the draft document currently being prepared on the Bureau's responsibility, with the help of UNICEF, is of particular importance. We understand that the draft should be sent to Governments in the next few days so that initial reactions can be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The European Union is anxious to receive the draft as soon as possible to enable it to determine its positions for that meeting.

The European Union takes this opportunity to pay tribute once again to UNICEF's vigilance each year in following up the World Summit, for its decisive contribution to the preparation of the 2001 session and for the efficiency and dedication with which Ms. Bellamy and her team carry out the Secretariat duties entrusted to them.

In conclusion, the European Union looks forward to the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution submitted to the Assembly by the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, incorporating the draft decisions adopted by the Preparatory Committee at its last meeting.

Mrs. Stanik (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): It is a great honour for me to speak on this subject on behalf of the GUUAM group of countries: Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova.

Children have always been and remain at the centre of attention and concern in human society because they are the ones who determine its future development. The well-being of society in turn depends on its attitude towards children, on how it meets the interests and needs of children, how it understands their problems and how it responds to them.

In September 1990, heads of State and Government met at the World Summit to examine the situation of children in the world and to join their efforts to ensure the survival, protection and development of children. As a result of this meeting, the World Declaration and Plan of Action were adopted and then approved by 181 countries. Today, looking at the past decade we can see what have been the successes and failures in their implementation.

The most significant contribution of States to protecting and encouraging the rights of children was the universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Quite recently, the Convention was supplemented by two Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The process of accession by Member States to these documents give us reason to hope that they will receive the same broad support as the Convention itself.

Several of the GUUAM States have already signed both Optional Protocols and the others will do so in the near future.

However, in spite of efforts by the international community, we are all still far from the day when the rights of the child become a reality throughout the world. Children are still the most unprotected and vulnerable part of our population. They continue to die from HIV infections and other diseases, are still victims of violence and sexual exploitation, and are sent to work at an early age and under difficult conditions.

In some parts of the world they have no access to medical services, nor even to food or drinking water.

Armed conflicts have a particularly negative effect on children, as do acts of aggression and foreign occupation. They turn them into refugees and forcibly displaced persons. Even if they can return home great damage is done at a moral level, which will be very difficult to heal. Another problem is that of hostages. It is no accident that the Commission on the Status of Women has for several years adopted a resolution entitled "Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts", calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all women and children who have been taken hostage. In this connection, the GUAAM countries feel that the special session of the General Assembly will be a very important and a timely forum for the world community to analyse the achievements of the Plan of Action, to renew its obligations and to take on new ones in the twenty-first century.

Our Governments have always considered the problems related to the protection of the interests of children to be a priority of our national policies. In our countries we have established legal mechanisms to implement the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the decisions adopted at the World Summit. We are developing comprehensive programmes, whose main areas are the creation of proper conditions for overall development of children, the assurance of legal and social protection and broad-ranging access to education and medical care. Particular attention by each State is being given to the most vulnerable categories of children, including orphans, children with no parental care, invalids and also children of very poor families. These programmes have been rather successful but, at the same time, our countries continue to encounter serious difficulties.

Our States have only existed for 10 years. In trying to form a democratic society and the bases for a socially oriented economy and to achieve integration into world processes, we have encountered both internal and external difficulties. As you know, we inherited structurally distorted economies financial and banking systems in need of reform, huge debts and deficits in our balances of payments. This situation is made worse by the environmental crisis in some countries, armed conflicts in other countries, and unstable situations along the borders of others. Ukraine, for example, continues to be preoccupied with the negative consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe, which has led to many serious and dangerous diseases that are a threat to mothers and children.

In our statement we have only touched upon a few of the vital problems concerned with the situation of children in our countries. Previous speakers have demonstrated that each State and each region has its own difficulties, its own specifics, and yet most of the questions are global. Their solution is only possible by joint efforts.

A special session of the General Assembly in 2001 should provide the impetus for concentrated and combined efforts on the part of the world community to deal with the obstacles of today and the challenges of tomorrow. Our delegations expect that the results of the forum will be directed towards specific practical results.

The future plan of action should be innovative, concise and comprehensive. It should take into account the interests of the industrial developed countries and the developing countries, as well as the countries in transition.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General and fully share his view of the value of a comprehensive approach to ensuring the rights and well-being of children. We also agree with the set of new questions which have been proposed for the final document: enjoying the benefits and avoiding the negative consequences of globalization; breaking the cycle of poverty in the life of a generation; protecting

vulnerable children; the participation of children and young people in decision making; the well-being of women; education of girls; and the fight against various diseases, including HIV infection.

In connection with HIV/AIDS, I should like to recall the recent initiative by Ukraine, supported by 97 countries, to hold a special session of the General Assembly in June next year to deal with the problems of HIV/AIDS. We think it is necessary to establish close links between both international forums on questions concerning ways to overcome this plague of the twenty-first century. The strategies produced at the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly should be taken into account in the twenty-sixth session in elaborating the strategy to combat AIDS with respect to children.

The GUAAM countries highly appreciate the role of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the process of preparing the forthcoming forum. Taking advantage of this opportunity I would like to thank the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Carol Bellamy, for her personal enormous contribution to this work.

On behalf of all our delegations, I would like to assure the Assembly that Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Uzbekistan will continue to participate actively in the preparatory process for the special session and the forum.

Quite recently, the heads of State and Government at the Millennium Summit adopted a Declaration containing a strategy and tactics for the construction of the world in the twenty-first century — a world free of war and violence, poverty and disease; a world of security, justice and happiness. Today's generation of children will have to build such a world, implementing the decisions adopted by the United Nations in these historic days.

What will these children be like? Will they be able to meet the challenges of globalization, overcome the environmental and economic problems and provide social progress, rights and freedom for all people? Will they have the strength in a few years to assume responsibility for the future of mankind? We have a year to work out positive solutions to these questions.

Mr. Mangachi (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation is gratified that in September next year the General Assembly will convene a special session for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In this connection, I wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on the agenda item before the Assembly, contained in document A/55/429, as well as the report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) entitled "Emerging issues for children in the twenty-first century", contained in document A/AC.256/3. These reports are important inputs to the preparatory process for the special session to review the World Summit for Children.

I wish also to express appreciation to the German delegation for coordinating in a constructive manner the draft resolution on this agenda item.

The special session to review the World Summit for Children will afford us an opportunity for appraisal of the implementation of the goals contained in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children, adopted a decade ago. The special session will also provide us with an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to fulfilling the commitments we made in 1990 and to undertaking a renewed commitment to finding new practical ways of solving problems that continue to face our children.

The analysis done by UNICEF indicates that over the last 10 years progress has been made in the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All Governments except two have ratified this important Convention. However, children, particularly those in the developing countries, continue to face serious challenges, such as deepening poverty and greater inequality; proliferating conflicts and violence; the deadly spread of HIV/AIDS and continuing discrimination, particularly against women and girls. Given this serious situation, it is imperative that the special session should address these issues on an urgent basis.

As we prepare for the special session, we should especially analyse the challenges that have impeded the attainment of the goals of the World Summit for Children and the measures that need to be taken to overcome those obstacles in the future.

One reason poor countries have failed to carry out the goals of the World Summit for Children is the prevalence of abject poverty. Children are hardest hit by poverty. Some of the major causes of poverty in developing countries include, among other things, debt, declining official development assistance, lack of market access for their goods in developed countries,

low commodity prices and health problems, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and tuberculosis.

Concerning debt, for example, a recent survey carried out by UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme found that two thirds of the developing countries spend more on external debt servicing than on basic social services and noted that

> "to spend more on external debt than on basic social services — when hundreds of millions of children lack access to basic education, primary health care, adequate food and safe drinking water — is not just morally wrong, it does not make economic sense".

We therefore expect that the special session will discuss various measures to address the above-mentioned problems, including international support for poverty eradication programmes in developing countries.

Concerning HIV/AIDS, at the time of the World Summit for Children, the ramifications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic had not yet been fully realized. Having started with the first three victims that it claimed in 1983, when it first surfaced in my country, the pandemic now claims one out of every ten people, most of whom are young people. At present half of all new infections occur mainly in the age group of people 10 to 24 years old. The cumulative effect of this phenomenon on the nation is enormous. Furthermore, it is generally recognized that there are three ways of spreading infection. Transmission of the disease from mother to child during pregnancy or breastfeeding is, in our opinion, one of the cruellest forms of infection. It is heart-wrenching to note that HIV/AIDS has created 11 million orphans worldwide. It is catastrophic that 90 per cent of these orphans are in Africa. We hope that the special session will come up with strategies that will aim at curtailing the spread of the pandemic so as to reduce its impact on children. We would like to see the special session on HIV/ AIDS, scheduled for June 2001, feeding into the special session on children so as to build synergies in this respect.

The last 10 years have been fraught with conflicts in many parts of the world. Africa, too, has had its share of conflicts, whose impact on children has been as wide as it has been traumatic. During times of armed conflict we witness massive violations of human rights, and at times children have been drawn into conflicts without regard for their rights. While we applaud the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in bringing to light the violations of children's rights in situations of armed conflict, we hope that the special session will build on the foundation laid by the Special Representative to institute a coherent framework for States' conduct in times of armed conflicts.

Associated with conflict is the problem of refugees. As a host country to refugees for over 40 years, my Government is in a good position to appreciate the traumatic effects of conflict on refugee children. Not only are the children uprooted from familiar surroundings, their childhood is interrupted as they flee to refuge, and at times they are violated while in flight. The scars inflicted on such children sometimes stay with them for life. We note with concern the assertion in Mrs. Graça Machel's report that armed conflicts kill and maim more children than soldiers. It is in this context that we support the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. We also believe that the ratification of the International Criminal Court Statute will provide the critical instrument for ending impunity and human rights violations against children.

Today the world has the knowledge, the financial resources and the technology to be able to guarantee support and critical interventions on behalf of children. As the special session meets in September next year to assess the progress of the last 10 years, we need to harness more than resources. We need to ensure that political will, at both the national and international levels, is sharpened so as to harness international cooperation aimed at breaking the stranglehold of poverty on poor countries. We need to appreciate the fact that while the world is not homogeneous, it nonetheless needs concerted efforts by all stakeholders in order to promote and protect the rights of children.

We laid a solid foundation for children in 1989 with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in 1990 with the World Summit for Children. We hope that the special session will afford us the opportunity to find meaningful ways of fulfilling the commitments towards the full enjoyment of the rights of every child.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): Ten years ago, the largest gathering of world leaders in history until that time agreed on the Declaration on the Survival, Protection

and Development of Children and a Plan of Action to implement that Declaration in the 1990s. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted only one year earlier, had set the foundation for the World Summit for Children, which in turn represented the first global action towards its implementation. Since 1990, many positive developments have taken place at the national, regional and international levels. Those developments are proof of the meaningful interaction of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention, which has achieved almost universal ratification, emphasizes the child as a bearer of rights who is entitled to a life free of discrimination, violence and exclusion, who needs to be protected and cared for and whose voice must be heard.

The process set up by the Convention and the World Summit led to greater international awareness and to ever-greater attention to children's rights and needs. Almost all of the major United Nations global conferences of the 1990s and their review processes addressed this issue. New international standards were also established, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and, most recently, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. At the national level, legal and policy measures were put in place in order to implement the Convention and to meet the targets set by the World Summit.

Nevertheless, the situation of children around the world is far from what was envisaged in the Convention and in the World Summit Declaration and Plan of Action. There continue to be major challenges in areas such as maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, education — particularly that of girls — access to safe drinking water and sanitation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the lack of resources.

In a commentary entitled "The time to sow", contained in *The Progress of Nations 2000*, Carol Bellamy, the Executive Director of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), states that

> "Poverty continues to enslave huge populations, denying 1.2 billion people — 600 million of them children — good health and productive lives."

The momentum created by the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the holding of the World Summit for Children must be kept alive if we are to fulfil our commitment to give every child a better future. Brazil, whose population encompasses a very large number of children, once more reaffirms that commitment. We have already achieved most of the goals set by the World Summit for Children. Maternal and infant mortality rates have been drastically reduced. The enrolment rate for basic education is at 96 per cent, and the gender gap in education has been closed. Poliomyelitis has been eradicated. Vaccination campaigns have reached more children than ever, and the goals regarding health, reducing malnutrition, and sanitation are within reach.

We are aware, however, that there is still much to be done. To protect the rights of children and to meet the needs and fulfil the hopes of every child is our ambition and our goal. To that end, the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly in 2001 to follow-up the World Summit for Children can make a major contribution. It is an opportunity to address old problems as well as new challenges, and to propose further action.

We are thankful to UNICEF for the guidance it has so far provided to the national evaluation process and for its role as the substantive secretariat for the international preparatory process. We would also like to express our appreciation for the manner in which Ambassador Patricia Durrant, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, is conducting the work of the Preparatory Committee.

We are confident that the special session will adopt a new agenda for children that will uphold the rights of children as the paramount focus of national and international efforts in the next century.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly, to be held next year, is called upon not only to assess the outcome of a decade of efforts by the international community to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Children, but primarily to define tasks in this sphere for the future.

In the Russian Federation the issue of protecting mothers and children is among the specific priorities of

State policy. That is why the top leaders of the country attach paramount importance to international cooperation in this sphere. In a personal letter to the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy, Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized our determined intention to develop constructive interaction with UNICEF in the interests of all children and young people. This is the central element of the Russian Federation's position regarding the preparation for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to children's issues.

It is with satisfaction that we note the considerable work done by the UNICEF secretariat on the preparation for the special session. We welcome the targeted orientation of this process to seek out consensus among a wide circle of partners on the issues of the rights of the child and the development of their human potential. We are convinced that, together with UNICEF, the various organizations of the United Nations system that are in one way or another concerned with children's issues should make their contribution to the preparation of the special session and, in particular, to the drafting of its concluding documents. In this regard, Russia attaches an especially important role to the regional commissions, and primarily to the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Within the framework of preparation for the special session, it is necessary to continue actively to involve Governments, United Nations organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society partners — including trade unions, the private sector, mass media and universities — to develop an optimum policy in the interest of children at the national, regional and international levels.

The report of the Preparatory Committee (A/55/43, part II) covers the work already done on the preparation for the special session. With good reason, it focuses attention on the problems of poverty, inequality, the proliferation of conflicts, the spread of HIV/AIDS, continuing discrimination against women and girls and other forms of social injustice as basic obstacles to the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In our opinion, it is precisely these problems that should be at the centre of the international community's attention in developing measures in the interests of children.

That will also require an integrated approach to the promotion of the rights and well-being of children and adolescents that includes three key policy areas: creating favourable conditions for all children to have a good start in life; providing them with opportunities to get a good education; and creating favourable opportunities for adolescents to fully develop their individual capacities.

At the same time, special attention should be paid to children in dire situations. We agree with the report's recommendation that clear-cut criteria be identified for assessing progress in the implementation of the Summit goals. It is necessary also to make more effective use of experts to develop strategies in the interest of children that will aim for realistic results that can be objectively assessed. In the interest of children, clearly, such recommendations should be reflected in the agenda for the future and in the future actions to be adopted at the special session.

The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child created a solid legal basis for future action by the international community in the interest of children and of the protection of their rights. The final document of the special session should aspire to full implementation, in practice, of all the provisions of the Convention in the interest of the children of all Member States. We consider that the outcome documents of the forthcoming special session should meet the criterion of universality and should address the problems faced by children throughout the world: in developing countries, especially in Africa, in developed industrialized countries and in States in transition.

One of the key elements of preparatory work for the special session is the holding of regional events, enabling us to coordinate the interests of all countries and to take specific regional conditions into account when the international community formulates global plans of pro-child action. In that connection, we think it would be useful and important to hold a preparatory event for countries of Central and Eastern Europe, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States. Those countries share similarities with regard to the situation of children and related issues; these are defined first and foremost by the economic hardships of the transition period, relating

especially to the situation of particularly vulnerable groups of children and of children who are in the charge of the State social security system.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): I have the honour to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Viet Nam delegation to add our voice to the discussion of preparations for the General Assembly's special session on children, to be held in September next year. Let me first register my country's strong support for and full commitment to making the special session a great success. In that context, I would like to thank Ambassador Durrant of Jamaica and her Bureau for their leading role in carrying out the work of the Preparatory Committee, and to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its tireless support throughout the whole process.

In 10 years of implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration in the 1990s, we have witnessed remarkable progress in various areas. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 191 countries, which clearly demonstrates almost universal political will and commitment to the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of children. We also recognize many achievements in the fields of health and education for children. But we are not yet able to say that we have attained the World Summit goals.

Moreover, we are now faced with even greater obstacles and challenges, such as deepening poverty and inequity, the growing burden of external debt, discrimination and violence, environmental problems, the explosive spread of HIV/AIDS and the proliferation of armed conflict. We need to step up the review and assessment process at all national, regional and international levels to come to a common understanding of existing obstacles and emerging issues for child welfare in the twenty-first century, in order to determine appropriate future action.

My country supports a rights-based approach in our efforts to realize the goals of the World Summit for Children. Thus, it is vital for all States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to implement fully their obligations under the Convention. The assessment of the 10 years of implementation of the Convention should be an essential element in the preparations for the special session. We also call upon States that have not ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible.

The welfare of children, however, cannot be promoted separately from a country's socio-economic development process. Therefore, my country is of the view that the review and assessment of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit at all levels, as well as the future actions to be defined by the special session, must be closely linked with socio-economic development policies. In view of the formidable challenges of globalization, especially for developing countries, it is highly important for us to find ways and means to build our capacity to sustain our hard-earned achievements in protecting and promoting our children's rights and welfare, and to move forward in the next centuries.

With a view to ensuring total success for the special session on children and for its follow-up, we support all efforts to find creative ways to mobilize constructive participation and contributions by all Member States, by the United Nations system, by other international organizations and by all other relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Plan of Action and preparing for the special session.

Viet Nam supports the draft resolution before the General Assembly this year under item 42 and will work cooperatively in the preparatory process leading to the special session on children.

Mr. Leiro (Norway): The preparations for the 2001 special session of the General Assembly to follow up the World Summit for Children are now well under way. Many important events have taken place that have contributed significantly to the preparations for the special session, and many more are planned for the next 10 months. It is particularly exciting to note all the activities taking place in the various regions. However, much work remains to be done as we enter the final months of preparation.

The national reports are an important component of the preparatory process. Those reports will serve as input for the Secretary-General's report to the special session. National reports should also be used by the Bureau and the Secretariat in formulating the outcome document. The first draft of the outcome document will be completed prior to the submission of the national reports. That means that the process of finalizing the outcome document must be sufficiently flexible to

allow for the inclusion of any new relevant information from national reports.

But the preparation of national reports is a valuable process in own right. It allows each Member State to take stock of its own progress in fulfilling the goals of the World Summit for Children. That in turn facilitates the translation of the outcome document into national strategies and plans of action. Norway looks forward to receiving the first draft of the outcome document, which should be ready shortly.

The views and requests voiced at the substantive Preparatory Committee meeting are nicely summarized in the Secretary-General's report on the state of preparations for the special session. Norway would like to join others in reiterating that the outcome document should be innovative, concise and action-oriented. It is important that the document be one that we can commit ourselves to with the same motivation and enthusiasm that was displayed at the World Summit for Children.

The outcome document should build on the results of the World Summit for Children by addressing the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving the goals established in 1990. It should also take into consideration the challenges that have emerged since then. This includes rising rates of poverty and disparity, the proliferation of conflicts and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Greater attention also needs to be given to addressing violations of children's rights.

The outcome document must be based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It must address the principles underpinning the Convention, including the best interests of the child, children's participation and non-discrimination. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women is also an important tool for ensuring that girls and women are not discriminated against.

Resolution 54/93 invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to participate actively in the preparations for the special session. The Executive Director of UNICEF, Carol Bellamy, invited all relevant United Nations organizations to contribute to the Secretary-General's report. These contributions are very valuable for the preparatory process.

The participation of the various United Nations organizations should not, however, be limited to providing input to the Secretary-General's report. Their input is necessary throughout the preparatory process, including comments on the outcome document and active participation in the Preparatory Committee meetings. They should also actively participate in the special session itself. This will ensure that the United Nations approach to addressing children's rights is a coordinated one and that the whole United Nations family feels responsible for following up the outcome document.

The participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society has been an important issue throughout the preparatory process. We have established an open and inclusive process which has given us the support of a wide variety of NGOs and civil society organizations. Norway commends this initiative and encourages continuous active participation on the part of NGOs and civil society organizations.

Much has been said to date about the participation of children and youth, both in the preparatory process and in the special session itself. Participation is one of the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children have a right to voice an opinion on issues affecting them and to have those opinions heard. The issues raised during preparations for the special session, and at the special session itself, will have a direct impact on the well-being of children. It is important, therefore, that children and young people be given the chance to voice their opinions and to be heard as part of this process.

The debate is very much alive on how to facilitate the participation of children and youth. This debate should certainly continue, but it must not get in the way of actually facilitating children's participation. Norway encourages all Member States to ensure the participation of children and young people at the local, national and global levels, both in the preparatory process and at the special session itself.

Finally, although our focus is now on the successful implementation of the special session for children, we must not view this as an end in itself. On the contrary, it is the beginning of our continuous efforts to ensure the well-being of children throughout the world. Let us take on the challenge of breaking the cycle of poverty in one generation by committing ourselves to ensuring that children are given a good start in life, good-quality basic education, and a safe and empowering adolescence.

Mr. Ocaziones (Colombia) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Ten years after the holding of the World Summit for Children and the achievement of the most-ratified human rights instrument in history for the protection of children, we are finding that many of the promises made in that framework have not been kept.

Nonetheless, during the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children, we will have a unique opportunity to assess our achievements, review the lessons learned, and, above all, to give fresh impetus to the alliances that will allow us to meet the challenge of moving from words to action.

The first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee for the special session, held from 30 May to 2 June of this year, made clear the obstacles encountered in the 1990s to the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children, and it also addressed various emerging issues related to children.

We have noted progress in areas such as perinatal mortality, immunization, oral rehydration and micro-nutrition. We are encouraged by the success of the Convention with respect to the monitoring of international commitments, and by the existence of legal instruments to protect minors, such as the Statute of the International Criminal Court, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the two optional protocols thereto.

Nonetheless, we also face great challenges — the AIDS pandemic, maternal mortality, difficulties in the area of education, problems in expanding the supply of drinking water, and achieving improved health conditions.

In addition, there is an urgent need to strengthen the protection of minors, especially those in difficult circumstances. I would mention in particular minors who are victims of armed conflict, of anti-personnel mines or of international trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, and also those minors who are affected by drug addiction or domestic violence.

We must be aware of a harsh reality that has been a factor in non-compliance with the commitments undertaken at the Summit: the fundamental obstacle represented by the situation of poverty. Our efforts will have to focus on breaking the vicious circle of poverty, as was recently recognized by our leaders at the Millennium Summit.

According to the annual report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), at least 600 million children and adolescents are growing up in families that are struggling to survive on under $1 a day. Poverty in developing countries causes the death of 11 million children under the age of 5, mostly from preventable diseases. Poverty is also clear when children do not attend school or receive a poor-quality education, when they work in dangerous jobs and when their families succumb to domestic violence.

In our opinion, the goals set at the World Summit for Children should be updated, with realistic indicators that take this factor into account and that allow all of us to mobilize strategic alliances at the intergovernmental level, in the United Nations system and in civil society. These alliances should help us to obtain an increase in resources and to make more effective use of the resources already available to combat poverty and to offer universal access to basic services. To achieve the goals of official development assistance, greater attention is required from donors.

In this context, we consider it appropriate to support the three-objective strategy proposed by UNICEF in order to break the cycle of poverty in a lasting manner, beginning with improvements in the quality of life of children and giving priority to three factors: first, that children should get a good start in life; secondly, that they should all have an opportunity to complete a basic education of good quality; and, thirdly, that adolescents should have an opportunity to fully develop their capacities.

These criteria can be complemented by the agreements reached during the process leading to next year's special session. They can also be given impetus by the results of the regional conferences, which have the advantage of adapting universally established goals to local realities. In this regard, we enthusiastically welcome the ministerial meetings held in Jamaica this year and in Peru last year, in the Latin American region. We also have great expectations of the results of the Ibero-American summit of heads of State and Government to be held in Panama in December, whose principal topic will be the situation of children.

Ms. Pearson (Canada): Over the last few months, calls to turn words into deeds on behalf of children have been intensifying, and I am happy to say that Canada has been taking up this challenge.

In September, Canada hosted the International Conference on War-affected Children, where representatives of Governments, the United Nations and its relevant agencies, members of civil society and young people themselves demonstrated a resolve to work in this area. It is Canada's hope that the Agenda for War-affected Children, agreed to by 130 Governments and circulated as a document (A/55/467, annex) of the General Assembly, will contribute to the special session preparatory process and that the outcome document of the special session will reflect the international community's commitment to action in this area.

Last month, Canada participated in the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Kingston, Jamaica. This meeting served as the regional preparatory meeting for the special session on children and provided an opportunity for the 37 participating Governments to reaffirm their commitment to children.

Canada's involvement in these two meetings underscores the priority we place on contributing to and facilitating dialogue on the rights of children, and we would encourage such dialogues to continue in the months ahead.

Canada would like to emphasize the importance we attach to safeguarding the rights of children in especially difficult circumstances. The list of these circumstances is unfortunately a long one and reflects how much remains to be done for the world's children. Among these particularly vulnerable children are street-involved children, child labourers, children who are sexually exploited and trafficked, children with disabilities, and children in conflict with the law or in the care of the State. Refugees and internally displaced children, minority and indigenous children and war-affected children are also in need of special protection.

With respect to war-affected children, in addition to actions taken at the International Conference on War-affected Children, Canada has signed and ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. We would encourage all States that have not already done so to sign, ratify and implement these tools for the protection of children and for the ending of impunity for those who violate their rights in times of armed conflict.

Children are also victims of trafficking, preyed upon by organized criminal groups. Canada was pleased to participate in the successful conclusion of negotiations on the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols, on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. These are important new tools to address heinous abuses of children.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of young people to participate in decision-making on issues that affect them. The Convention also requires that States make certain that children's opinions are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. For this reason, Canada is an active proponent of the participation of children and youth in meetings focused on young people. We welcomed and facilitated the dynamic, meaningful participation of young delegates at the September Conference on War-affected Children and also at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Jamaica.

In Winnipeg, 50 young people, including children from war-affected regions, were able to contribute to both the expert and the ministerial segments of the conference. They have committed themselves to their own follow-up activities on behalf of war-affected children.

In Kingston, Jamaica, some 120 children and youth from the Americas attended the meeting as members of national delegations or with the support of non-governmental organizations. The Canadian delegation included two youth participants, who acted as co-chairs of a thematic workshop organized by Canada on the issue of child and youth participation. Our two youth delegates also lent their expertise to Canadian negotiators working on the outcome document.

The successful involvement of children and youth in such meetings only serves to reinforce our conviction that the active participation of young people is critical to developing strategies to address the issues that affect them. We once again invite those Governments that have not already done so to include young people as members of their delegations in both the preparatory process and the special session itself.

For the outcome document of the special session, Canada is in favour of a short and focused political declaration followed by a set of clear, appropriate and measurable goals. While we set goals for certain

specific actions for child survival, protection and development at the 1990 World Summit for Children, additional goals to address obstacles and emerging issues will require extra effort and commitment. The attainment of these goals will require the efforts of Governments, civil society and children and youth themselves. We would like to take this opportunity to express our support for the efforts of the United Nations Children's Fund to engage members of civil society in this process.

In closing, I reaffirm Canada's commitment to the preparatory process for the special session. Our national consultations with civil society and with children and youth are well under way, as are Government-wide preparations. It is our hope that the special session will spur concrete action for children and that all over the world countries will be turning words into deeds.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to inform members of an addition to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Monday, 20 November 2000, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 51, "Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)" as the first item.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.